



**You have downloaded a document from
RE-BUŚ
repository of the University of Silesia in Katowice**

Title: Introduction

Author: Robert Pyka

Citation style: Pyka Robert. (2015). Introduction. W: G. Libor, R. Pyka, D. Nowalska-Kapuścik (red.), "Regionalisation in Europe : the state of affairs" (S. 7-9). Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.



Uznanie autorstwa - Użycie niekomercyjne - Bez utworów zależnych Polska - Licencja ta zezwala na rozpowszechnianie, przedstawianie i wykonywanie utworu jedynie w celach niekomercyjnych oraz pod warunkiem zachowania go w oryginalnej postaci (nie tworzenia utworów zależnych).



UNIwersYTET ŚLĄSKI
W KATOWICACH



Biblioteka
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



Ministerstwo Nauki
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego

INTRODUCTION

Transformations which are broadly associated with the development of the system of global interdependence and the economy based on human intellect have changed our reference to the territory and thus influenced the way we use space today. Although the state still is and undoubtedly will be a key point of reference and guarantor of social order for a long time, its effectiveness in many areas is weakening now. The initiative is taken by subterritorial units which heretofore remained in the shadow (for example regions) or new territorialities which were not always reflected in the administrative structure of the state (for instance metropolitan areas).

Economic development is one of those areas that has undergone a territorialisation process. The state has lost the ability of generating economic growth in the Post-Fordism economy, inter alia, in the region which accumulates capitals necessary for the development and creating local environment favorable to innovations and creativity.

The transformation of the economic fundamentals is also accompanied by the changes of citizens' identity, which is often associated with the crisis of a uniform civic identity within the nation-state. The place of a coherent national citizenship is being gradually replaced by pluralistic model including urban, metropolitan and, above all, regional identity.

Both groups of changes relating to the territorialisation, namely in the field of economy and citizenship, can overlap one another in different configurations, showing possible correlations between regionalism and regionalisation. Regionalism – being an expression of specific awareness of people living in a given territory, delineating their identity in cultural and ethnic, as well as economic and political levels – may or may not lead to regionalisation understood as such a transformation of territorial-administrative structure of the state in the case of which regions become independent local government units equipped with specific prerogatives and competencies.

Spain is an example of the state where the Catalan ethno-cultural and economic regionalism (metropolitan region of Barcelona), but also the Basque separatism have become the basis for the regionalisation of the state and extracting autonomous regions. But the real question is how such a type of regionalisation is deepening the existing regionalisms which after 'satisfying' their autonomous aspirations started to formulate independent demands now.

France is an example of a rationalist approach to regional issues. Regionalisation carried out as a consequence of decentralisation in the early 1980s when 22 regions were created as local government units for the first time, was the result of an awareness of the need to adapt the country's territorial structure to modern development processes as well as to the European Union's regional policy. Adopted on 17th January 2015, the law on the delimitation of regions which has reduced their number from 22 to 13 is a continuation of this process being the manifestation of political pragmatism. The main motives for this reform were to create large regions (average of 4 million inhabitants) capable to generate economic development effectively and able to compete with their European counterparts. The identity factors gave way to pragmatics and political alliances, as a result of which such regions as Alsace, Lorraine and Champagne-Ardenne have been merged.

In Polish conditions regionalisation took place due to the territorial reform of 1999 and is an example of a pragmatic approach to the issues of regional identity as well. This was associated with a high level of diversity when it comes to regional identity and regionalism in Poland and, above all, the will to maintain a homogeneous and unitary structure of the state. As a result, 49 voivodeships were replaced by 16 relatively large ones that loosely refer to the historical divisions. In such an approach, however, there was no place for political recognition of separate identity of some of them, including Upper Silesia, which for example in the interwar period had a large degree of autonomy. That is why today Polish regions have above all a functional dimension and are de-concentrated areas of both central government structures as well as local authorities.

The regionalisation taking place in new economic conditions seems to be a historical necessity arising from pragmatics of the economic system and the recognition of the rights of each individual to cultivate his or her own distinct regional identity. Therefore, the future of the state remains an open question especially from the point of view of independent tendencies in some parts of Europe. However, due to of the change in the Russian international policy and the threat from Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham we realise now more than a few years ago how important role the state has to play and how strong the European Union thanks to its member states should be.

This book is a joint initiative of the members of the international research network OLA (Observatory on Local Autonomy) and invited guests who concentrate in their research on regional issues from different social, economic and political perspectives.

This publication should also be seen as a contribution of the Polish branch of OLA led by Robert Pyka to its development as an excellent platform of exchanging thoughts and ideas on issues crucial for the future of Europe and the development of local government.

Robert Pyka